

SHOULD A MUSLIM FOLLOW ONE OF THE FOUR MADHAAHIB?

Shaykh Mashhoor Hasan Salmaan

Translated by Hisham Assing



Date Published: May 6th 2008 | © www.troid.org – Globalising Islaamic Knowledge



Question (nos. 429): Do you advise a Muslim to follow one of the four madhaahib, using it as a source reference whenever there are conflicting opinions? Does following a madh-hab lead to success? And should a Muslim follow the opinion of other scholars as found in the books (of fiqh) that mentions the various opinions (of the different madhaahib)?¹

Answer: This is a very detailed matter as there are many books that have been written about this topic. What is obligatory on a Muslim is that he knows the correct meaning of: *Asbhadu anna laa ilaaha illaa Allaah. Asbhadu anna Mubhammadan rasoolullaah*. Hence, the meaning of the shahaadah of the Muslim, that is 'none has the right to be worshiped but Allaah'. And the meaning of 'none has the right to be followed unconditionally but the Messenger of Allaah'.

Thus, whoever calls to following one imaam to the exclusion of the others, and obligates the ummah to follow that particular scholar - from amongst the four Imaams or those before or after them - then this person is misguided, sinful, and innovative. We are not Bakrees, 'Umarees, 'Uthmaanees, or 'Alawees. We are Muslims who submit to the commands of Allaah Azza wa Jal. Hence we do not worship except Allaah, and we do not follow except the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). We ascribe ourselves to Islaam. So the call

¹ (Transcribed: 12/06/07)

that it is obligatory to follow only one scholar is misguidance and impermissible, and this is what took place amongst the latter generations of those who adhere to a madh-hab.

The manner in which the early generations followed the four madhaahib has now become an issue of hizbiyyah (blind partisanship). Thus, people became divided here and there; everyone calling to his group.

As for teaching the people by beginning with the basics, loving and hating based upon the obedience of Allaah, working to give victory to the deen, calling the people to the deen, and connecting them with Allaah and the last day; then these matters have been overlooked these days. To the point whereby a person would smile in the face of his brother if he is from his group; if not, he ignores him and pays no attention to him, even though he may be more upright and knowledgeable than him. Hence hizbiyyah has become the new madh-habism.

We call to the text of the deen, and to follow the Kitaab and the Sunnah. We respect all of our scholars, and we distance ourselves from those who detract from their status or speak ill of them. And from the scholars that are most deserving of this respect are the four imaams; Imaam Abu Haneefah, Imaam Maalik, Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee, and Imaam Ahmad.

We ask Allaah's mercy for them all, we love them, and we acknowledge their status. However we do not obligate all the Muslims to follow one of them. For the truth is spread out amongst them and is spread out amongst those other than them. What is important is that which the evidences from the Kitaab and the Sunnah is in support of. All of them are either of two groups; those who were correct, they will have two rewards, or those who were incorrect, they will have one reward. And as for those whose opinions were in contradiction to the evidences, then it was not their intention to contradict the commands of the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

The four Imaams are the ones who taught us to say what we previously said; as it was said to Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee, "O Abu 'Abdullaah, the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said such and such, what do you say?" So Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee became very angry and said, "Subhaanallaah! Do you see me leaving a church! Do you see me wearing a belt (that the Christian religious men wear)! You say to me: The Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said such and such, what do you say? I do not say except that which the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said." It is also authentically

reported that he said, "If a hadeeth is saheeh, then that is my madh-hab." They used to say, "It is impermissible for a person to adopt our opinions until he knows from where we took our evidences."

We specifically mentioned the Four Imaams because at one period in time people used to have such an extreme bias towards these madhaahib that it reached a point of such blind partisanship that the following was an issue of debate: Is it permissible or not for a Hanafee to marry a Shaafi'ee? That is because the Hanafees believe that whoever says, 'I am a mu'min insha'allaah' then such a person has doubt in his eemaan, and whoever doubts his eemaan he has committed kufr. Whereas the Shaafi'ees believe that it is permissible for a Muslim to say, 'I am a mu'min inshaallaah' as a way of seeking Allaah's blessings and because of the fear of uncertainty regarding what state one will die in.

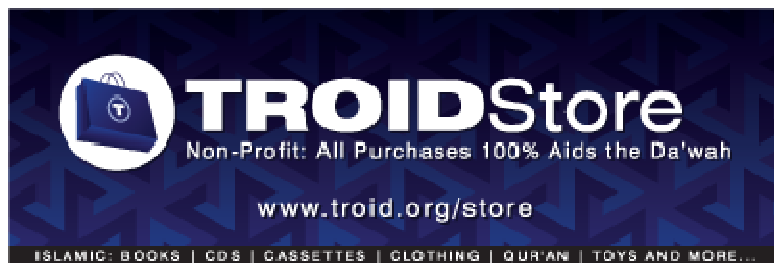
Hence, as a result some of the extremely partisan Hanafees posed the issue: 'Is it permissible or not for a Hanafee to marry a Shaafi'ee relegating them to the status of the people of the book,' and we seek Allaah's refuge? Whereas, both Imaam Abu Haneefah and Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee are innocent of such detestable, madh-hab fanaticism.

Thus we say that what is obligatory on the Muslims is that they follow the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, as men are guides to the truth; they could be correct, they could be incorrect. That which is free from mistakes is the Book of Allaah and the sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and no one is infallible. However, mistakes - which everyone makes, do not detract from the status of a scholar as he is excused. We love them, we respect them, and we do not denounce them nor do we speak ill of them. Nor do we exclusively follow one person except the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

However, the issues for which there exists no explicit text and it is based on comprehension and the ability to derive rulings there from, then what is obligatory on the Muslim is that he follows those whom he views as having the qualifications, extensive knowledge, precision, prudence, and the fear of Allaah. Hence, there is nothing wrong if a student of knowledge is inclined to the opinion of a particular scholar if no explicit text regarding a particular issue exists.

And the most knowledge about the opinions of those Four Imaams were their students. Al-Muzanee was one of the most distinguished students of Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee and he used to say, "If was permissible to blindly follow anyone,

I would not follow except Ash-Shaafi'ee." Nevertheless, he was not a blind follower of him, and taqleed (blind following) is only permissible out of necessity, especially for the common folk. Taqleed is something that a person cannot avoid. Thus for the person who specializes in hadeeth, it is not possible for him to delve extensively into the detailed issues of fiqh or the language. So he has no choice but make taqleed of those who established principles with regards to difficult matters of the language, and likewise the rest of the sciences of the deen. Hence, taqleed is permissible when necessary. At-Tahaawee said in his renowned statement, "None makes taqleed except an ignorant or a foolish person." Taqleed is not 'ilm. 'Ilm is what Allaah said and what His Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said. So know the issues and know the evidences for it. A person must worship his Rabb based on baseerah, clarity, and knowing what Allaah loves and is pleased with.



Learn about and support our many projects,
<http://www.troid.org/the-reign-of-islamic-dawah-centre.html>